

# The Second Atlas Battle

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Summary: Several years after the Covenant was repelled in the Seige of the Atlas Moons, they are back. A single human frigate, the TESTAMENT OF MANKIND, equipped with a few hundred marines, a platoon of ODST, and a decent armoury, are sent to defend the planet.

## 1. Prologue

\_Feet first into hell.\_

That's our motto. And by the look of that Covenant army down there, that's exactly what we are headed into.

The name's Wallace Cochrane, by the way. ODST, from the 102nd division. Helljumpers, as some people say. Kick-ass Marines, as we like to.

I only hope we can kick some ass today.

\* \* \*

><p>ORBIT OF ATLAS<p>

0849 LOCAL TIME

ONBOARD HUMAN FRIGATE \_TESTAMENT OF MANKIND\_

Captain Lawrence Holwerda strode up and down the ranks of the Marines standing to attention before him. Off to one side was a ten man platoon of ODST's, and on the other was a holographic display of the ships AI, Caroline.

'Below us is the planet Atlas, as most of you know.' Holwerda said in straight military tones. 'Several years back, Vice Admiral Danforth Whitcomb managed to repel the Covenant from this system. Now they are back and it is up to us to stop them. Caroline?'

'Sir.' The AI, a blue humanoid dressed in what appeared to be Viking arms and armour, replied. 'Surprisingly, the Covenant have only sent in a small armada, two cruisers and a frigate. Granted we are still outnumbered, but we know the terrain down there, while they never made it past the Moons.'

'Thankyou Caroline.' Captain Holwerda replied. 'So here it is straight marines. We have ourselves a good old-fashioned land shootout ahead of us. Alpha team-' This was followed by a "hoo-rah" from the left third of the marines, '-You will be split into two teams, each in charge of defending one of the orbital guns. Lose them, and our chances go from slim to zero. You will be taken down in Pelicans Foxtrot-108 and Delta-316. Dismissed!'

The marines and Pelican pilots rushed towards the hanger to get prepped for battle.

'Teams Bravo and Charlie-' more "hoo-rahs" 'Will be placed at key defence locations. It will be your responsibility to make sure the covenant do NOT reach those guns. Do whatever you have to do to stop them. I don't care if you have to result in guerrilla warfare, those aliens do not reach the guns! Dismissed!'

More "hoorahs" were heard as the remaining marines headed toward the Pelican bay, ready to be taken down.

'As for you ODST's, you will do what you do best: wait till the going gets hot and then take over. Get prepped and ready, I have a feeling it won't be to long until you are needed.'

'Sir yes Sir!' the platoon responded as one. Their leader, Corporal Wallace Cochrane, stepped forward. 'Permission for full access to the armoury sir?'

Captain Holwerda thought for a moment. Then he smiled. 'Permission granted. Give 'em hell.'

## 2. Alpha team one

ATLAS UPPER ATMOSPHERE

0902 LOCAL TIME

ONBOARD PELICAN FOXTROT-108

'Babysitting duty. That's what we get?' Private Michael Conrad muttered loudly. 'We are stuck babysitting a few guns while the rest get to actually see some action. This sucks.'

'Shut it, Marine!' The team's sergeant, a bulky female named Alice Fowler, yelled. 'At least this way we won't be the first to die. Count yourself lucky.'

Conrad muttered a few words under his breath, then said. 'Sir yes sir.'

Sergeant Fowler stared at him for a few more seconds, then resume checking her weapon, a BR55HB 'Battle Rifle'. Satisfied, she loaded a

clip, chambered around and clicked on the safety. Around her, most of the other marines were doing likewise. All had combat knives and M6B Handguns, while there was a motley assortment of battle rifles, MA5B Assault rifles, M90 Shotguns, and a singular SRS99 sniper rifle, belonging to the sharpshooter George 'Bullseye' Gundar.

Just then the hatch at the back of the Pelican began to open, as a voice came over the loudspeaker. 'Approaching LZ, eta half a minute, thought ya might want to see the scenery.'

The Marines all looked up from what they were doing. Indeed, the landscape of Atlas was quite beautiful. The land surrounding the orbital gun was mostly forest, with a mountain surrounding and a waterfall could be seen " and now heard " a mile or so away.

The marines felt the pelican slow as it began to land. Once it was stationary, they unbuckled and leapt out, fanning outwards even though attacks were unlikely at this time. As the pelican began to leave, a ten man squadron of marines filed out from the bunker near the orbital gun: the troops already stationed here. Sergeant Fowler shouted \_Attention!\_ And her marines stood still and saluted. The leader of the other troops, a sergeant as well, did the same. Then he strode up to Fowler and shook her hand.

'Sergeant Adam Lawson. Been stationed here since the Siege a few years back.' He said.

'Sergeant Alice Fowler.' Fowler replied. 'Stationed here since just now.'

Lawson smiled and let out a small laugh. He was of average height and build, and like all marines had his dark hair shaved short. Unlike most marines he had a strange tattoo over his left eye. He noticed that Fowler was looking at it.

'It's an old Celtic symbol; the Triskelion. Meant to stand for competition and man's progress. Kinda symbolises our war with the Covenant.' He explained. Fowler nodded and then got to business.

'Situation, as you probably know by now, is this.' She began. 'The Covenant are back and we are screwed if we don't keep this gun online. So me and my men are here to help defend it. Care to show us around so we can take stock?'

Lawson nodded. 'I'll take you up top so you can assess the land. The rest of your men can follow mine to the barracks. I have a few scouts out already so we don't need to worry about any attacks just yet, so they are welcome to hit the mess.'

Fowler nodded her thanks and followed Lawson. As the rest of the marines walked towards the barracks, the ever unhappy Private Conrad could again be heard muttering about babysitting duty. One of the other marines from the \_Testament\_ slapped him on the back and, with a laugh, said 'Could be worse mate, ya might have been stuck here from the start with these guys!'

\* \* \*

><p>From 'up top' not only was Fowler able to assess the land and

spot key defence areas, but she could once again appreciate the beauty of Atlas. 'This really is a lovely spot to have been posted.'

'Yeah,' Lawson replied. 'It really grows on you.'

Fowler let her gaze wander for a few moments, then began planning. 'What, if you have any, is your heavy weaponry here?' she asked.

Lawson pointed to a few spots. 'We can place turrets in those three places; they are connected to the small service tunnel. It might take a few hours to get in place, but once connected we can have an almost unlimited length of firing time as those tunnels go right back to the armoury. We have three armed Warthogs, two of them standard and one GUASS, and in our armoury we have a few rocket launchers and several ammo cases. I notice that one of your men is a sniper; we have plenty of high bore clips for him if needs be.'

Fowler nodded her thanks. Having a sniper would be a huge asset and she knew that if they had to rely on only what Gundar had brought with him, it might not turn the tide. 'Am I correct in assuming that your scouts are in the Warthogs?'

Lawson shook his head. 'Because of the forest we decided to bring in a couple of Mongooses, that way we don't lose a good 'Hog if something happens to them. And before you start worrying about their safety, a Mongoose'll be faster in that kind of terrain.'

'Alright then.' Fowler said. 'I think I've worked out our winning strategy.' She quickly outlined her ideas to Lawson, and he agreed.

'Let's get them into action.' Lawson said as they stepped down into the barracks.

\* \* \*

><p>Private Conrad looked up as the two Sergeants strode into the mess hall. 'Oh joy, our glorious leaders return.' He said grumpily.<p>

'Seriously, what is your problem?' One of Lawson's marines asked. 'All you've done since you got here is complain. You shouldn't be in the marines if you're this soft.'

A few of the other marines laughed, including some of Conrad's own squad. 'Screw you guys.' He said. 'I'm having a smoke.'

He stepped outside as one of the scouts were coming in. The scout was a youngish man, maybe twenty-five or so, with short red hair and a tattoo of a sword on his left forearm. When he spoke he had a faint Irish lilt.

'Who're you supposed to be?' he asked Conrad.

Conrad snorted derisively. 'You're relief, rookie.'

The scout just smiled. 'Whatever you say, boss. Have a nice scout.' He handed Conrad a pair of high powered binoculars and walked inside

the barracks. Conrad looked down at the binoculars, then at the Mongoose the scout had arrived on. Then he smirked. \_Time to get out of here\_.

Conrad jumped on the quad bike and rode off. He never came back.

### 3. ODS'T Heaven

ORBIT OF ATLAS

0903 LOCAL TIME

ONBOARD UNSC FRIGATE\_ TESTAMENT OF MANKIND\_

Corporal Wallace Cochrane and his ODS'T squadron strode into the armoury and couldn't help but smile. Arranged neatly in rows were multiples of just about every weapon the UNSC had to offer. Sniper rifles, M19 Rocket launchers, SMG's, you name it, it was probably there. Allowing him and his men a few moments of soldierly ecstasy, he spoke with a huge grin. 'Guys, you know your specialties. Arm up, and get ready to rock 'n' roll.'

Three of the ODS'T's were impressive marksmen, and instantly grabbed a sniper rifle each, and stuffed huge amounts of ammo into their packs. Two followed this up with a battle rifle for a secondary, while the third opted for a scoped SMG.

Cochrane had a short look around and finally settled on a M6 Galilean Nonlinear Rifle, more commonly known as the SPARTAN Laser. One of his men, a huge guy known only as 'Rocko', looked at the weapon and said 'You sure you wanna carry something that's affiliated with those tin can soldiers?

Rocko was referring to the SPARTAN-II's, an elite group of soldiers that most ODS'T's hated as a group, though they respected the SPARTAN fighting ability.

Cochrane smiled. 'You ever seen one of these babies shoot?' he asked Rocko, who had by now picked up a rocket launcher and a shotgun. Rocko shook his head. 'Thought not.' Cochrane answered. 'This thing'll take a Wraith out in one shot. Hell, it might even take out a Phantom!'

Rocko thought about the two Covenant vehicles, then whistled, impressed. 'Point taken. But I'll stick with good ol' Bessie here.'

Sure enough, Rocko had already christened his rocket launcher and scratched the name 'Bessie' onto the side with his combat knife. Cochrane laughed and picked up a few spare power coils for the Laser, then grabbed himself an assault rifle. Following the rest of the ODS'T's who had picked their weapons, he grabbed a handful of grenades and headed down to the SOEIV (Single Occupant Exoatmospheric Insertion Vehicle) or Drop-pod bay.

Once there, he loaded his weapons into the holders on one of the open pods, so all he needed to do was hop in and he'd be ready for insertion. He placed his equipment pack in there too; if he was

somewhere else on the frigate he wanted to be able to run fast to the pods. Then he marched up the bridge to speak with the Captain.

On arrival he crisply saluted and said simply 'ODST's prepped and ready for insertion sir!'

Captain Holwerda nodded. 'Good work Corporal. You and your men should rest up while you can.'

Cochrane saluted again and strode off to let his men know. Then he walked back to the barracks and let himself sleep.

#### 4. Scouting

SURFACE OF ATLAS

0911 LOCAL TIME

ECHOLEON PASS

The instant Bravo team touched down they had trouble. Unbeknownst to them, a squad of Jackal scouts had been resting near their LZ, and as soon as the first marine stepped out of the Pelican's rear hatch, one of the Jackals shot him with a Beam Rifle. The marine died instantly.

A sniper from the second of the four Pelicans lined up the Jackal and managed to kill it and three others before having to duck back behind cover to avoid an overcharged plasma bolt. The third and fourth Pelicans dropped their Warthogs, and a trio of marines from both jumped on and began unloading a barrage of gunfire into the large group of Jackals. More marines poured out from the Pelican hatches and began firing upon the enemy. Outnumbered, the twenty or so Jackals stubbornly created a shield wall, shooting hot plasma bolts back at the marines.

The marines quickly switched tactics, and began lobbing grenades at the shield wall. The concussive force from each grenade caused the Jackals to stumble and every time a gap appeared in the wall, marksmen took advantage and quickly lined up the heads of the enemy in their rifle sights. Within minutes the squad of jackals had been eliminated, and the marines let out a rousing 'Hoo-rah!'.

Suddenly a sniper rifle boomed and a string of curses could be heard over the radio. 'One of the Jackal skirmishers got away. They'll soon know we're here.' Corporal Fred Granger, the sniper from the second Pelican reported.

'All right men.' The senior Sergeant in charge, Donald Weathers, said. 'Establish a defensive perimeter. The Covenant could be on us any minute now. Snipers, make some hides. The rest of you, unload the rest of the gear from the Pelicans.'

Extra ammunition and supplies were quickly unloaded, enabling the Pelicans to return to the Testament. Meanwhile, the Snipers quickly scouted the surrounding area for some safe holes where they could shoot without being seen. As soon as they had the area secure, the marines got ready for battle. One that might be their last.

\* \* \*

><p>Charlie team had it a lot easier. Their LZ was a few miles east of Bravo's, and was clear of any enemies. The downside was that it was a lot closer to where the Covenant were based, and the Pelicans had to fly low to avoid being seen by the Banshee patrols. Three scouts climbed a small ridge so they could see the enemy encampment. 'Geez, would you look at that.' One of them said shaking his head. He was looking through the scope on his sniper rifle. 'I count maybe four groups of Hunters, at least a thousand Grunts, couple hundred Jackals and maybe two score Elites.'<p>

'Copy that, Jackson.' The sergeant in charge of Charlie replied over the radio. 'What is their vehicular status?'

Jackson, the scout, replied 'Twoâ€ Three Wraiths, a dozen Banshees and perhaps the same amount of Ghosts.'

Moving the sniper rifle around he spotted some strange looking metal objects. 'Seeing something strange here Sarge. What looks to be giant wheels with seats, unsure of any possible armaments. Maybe the Covenant have made a new kind of vehicle?'

'We'll have to see what they do with them.' The Sergeant replied. 'Send the other two back down, while you keep an eye out. I don't want any nasty surprises.'

'Roger that, Sarge.' Jackson said, nodding to the other two scouts to leave. They had heard the radio broadcast, they were just waiting on his confirmation. The three had been together on many campaigns and trusted Jackson's judgment over any other commanders. As they left, Jackson took another look through the sniper scope. The enemy camp was at the extreme distance of the scopes magnifying abilities, so any real details were unknown. This was why he had a strange feeling in his gut about the report he had made. Something didn't sit right with one of the groups, the Elites. Ordinarily they were extremely disciplined, but the ones he could see here seemed to be arguing with each other.

They also didn't look quite right. Normally, Elites were tall, athletic looking aliens. These ones, while still huge, looked more bulky. Added to the strange huge wheel things, this Covenant army was quite a mystery. Hopefully, not one that would prove fatal to his comrades.

Suddenly hurried voice came over the radio. 'Charlie team! This is Bravo. Our position has been compromised by a Jackal Skirmisher. It was last seen heading in your direction. If it gets to the main force, we will lose the element of surprise here!'

Another voice came over. 'Just saw it run past my position. Should be approaching you now Sarge.'

A short barrage of automatic fire was heard. 'Shit! It dodged behind a tree! I can't catch it!'

Jackson turned towards the Charlie base and scanned the surrounding forest. He saw a flicker of movement and followed it with his scope until he was sure it was the Jackal. He fired once, twice, but was unable to hit the nimble alien. It finally broke the cover of the

trees and Jackson was able to line up a shot. He killed the Jackal, but it was seen by the Covenant army.

Jackson said quickly 'Sarge they know we're here, and know at least my position.'

Back at Charlie camp, the Sarge gave his orders. 'All right men. Let's give 'em hell.'

## 5. A New Threat

SURFACE OF ATLAS

0948 LOCAL TIME

ECHOLEON PASS

The Covenant was on the move.

The tramp-tramp of over a thousand pairs of feet, coupled with the continual hum of anti-gravity pads, grew louder with every passing moment. As they approached the forest edge a mile away from Charlie base, the marines discomfort grew. They were outnumbered by almost ten to one. They were outmatched in weaponry. But they were all battle hardened, ready to fight to their last breath.

From his vantage point, Corporal Andrew Jackson could see the whole battlefield. He would be relaying tactical information to the marines at Charlie base, and would be searching for any Covenant officers he could take out. As he peered through the scope on his rifle, he saw something that shocked him.

His targeting reticule was lined up with the head of one of the leading alien classes, a hulking brute of a thing carrying what looked like a ceremonial mace. \_Those aren't Elitesâ€|\_ he thought, a worm of fear burrowing through his belly. He called in on his radio.

'Sarge, I got good news, and bad news.'

'Give it to us straight Jackson. Start with the good.' The sergeant, Kevin Daniels, replied.

'There aren't any Elites in this army. In fact, I doubt there are any on this planet.' Jackson said in a low tone.

There was silence for a few seconds. 'I don't like where this is going.' Daniels replied, a small amount of worry in his voice. 'What's the bad news?'

Jackson took a deep breath before answering. 'There appears to be another species of alien leading this battle. They look like Elites on steroids and hair growth pills. Or gorillas in armour.'

Daniels swore. 'This sounds bad. I'm calling command.'

\* \* \*

><p>On board the <em>Testament of Mankind,<em> Captain Lawrence



Holwerda was thinking about the report Sergeant Daniels had just given. Replying back he said

'Sergeant, we have just received intel on this new species. We know them as 'Brutes', and this is an apt name indeed. They are larger in height and body mass than Elites, and are prone to beserking at times. They are EXTREMELY dangerous. I recommend extreme caution when fighting these aliens.'

'More so than usual?' Sergeant Daniels replied with a sardonic laugh.

The Captains reply was deadly serious. 'Do not underestimate them, Sergeant.'

Daniels acknowledged and signed off. Captain Holwerda then turned to Caroline, the ships AI. 'Wake the ODSs. I'm sending them in.'

## 6. The End of Conrad

SURFACE OF ATLAS

0951 LOCAL TIME

ECHOLEON PASS

Leaning against his stolen Mongoose, Private Michael Conrad was busy lighting his cigarette. He had judged himself far enough away from his team mates that he would not be discovered, and had turned his radio off. \_Let them worry if they want,\_ he thought, \_especially that bitch Fowler.\_

Conrad, as far as marines go, was an average soldier. Unfortunately, his rebellious streak was detrimental to his promotion likeliness, and explained why he was still a private at thirty-five. In fact, many people were unsure how he managed to get into the UNSC in the first place. He always did only the bare minimum of what he was ordered, and frankly didn't give a damn about what people thought of him. Sure he was likely to get a lot of crap once he returned but, he reasoned with himself, it'd sure piss his sergeant off. He chuckled at the thought.

As he leant there puffing away, he didn't notice the pair of Jackal Skirmishers nearby. One raised its Covenant Carbine to eye level and was about to take the shot when the other held up its hand as a warning. It then whispered something into its comrade's ear, and they both grinned evilly. Silently, the two aliens backtracked the way they came.

Throwing his finished cigarette to the ground and crushing it to put out the embers, Conrad swung a leg over the Mongooses seat. He glanced around him for a moment and then yelped with fright. Only a few dozen metres away stood a huge Brute, a vicious looking weapon in its hands. Conrad's eyes widened in shock at the huge curving blade at the base of the weapon. Meanwhile the Brute just stood there, leering at him, almost daring him to try something.

Conrad quickly started the Mongoose and floored the accelerator. The Brute merely turned slightly and fired a projectile from the weapon.

It hit the ground just in front of Conrad's Mongoose, exploding and causing the Mongoose to flip from the concussion. Conrad screamed as he was thrown through the air, and landed with a heavy thud at the base of a tree, cracking two or three ribs in the process. Painfully, he rose to his feet and saw the Brute marching towards him, the fearsome weapon still in its hands.

\_Can't run\_, he thought, \_that thing'll shoot me with its grenade launcher. \_He felt around his waist, and realised all he had was his combat knife and pistol. Now trembling with fear, he raised his pistol and unloaded an entire clip into the oncoming Brute. He succeeded in knocking off its helmet and causing it to pause momentarily, blood dripping from several bullet wounds. Conrad stood there, gun smoking, hands trembling. 'Th-That's right you Covenant bastard. Not s-so tough now, are you?'

From only a few metres away, Conrad could see every detail of the Brute clearly. Its huge, muscular body, covered with rough hair, arms tensed with the adrenalin of battle. Its gorilla-like face, merciless black eyes dripping with hate. And perhaps worst of all, its smirking mouth with horribly sharp teeth. Hoping for a miracle, Conrad cautiously reloaded his gun and turned on his radio. Suddenly the Brute roared a primeval roar and charged at Conrad, who began firing wildly at the beast.

Three shots and 'Oh fu-' was all Conrad got out before the Brute split him in half from the neck down with the blade on the end of its grenade launcher. The Brute roared with delight, and sickeningly cut off his head as a trophy.

\* \* \*

><p>Back at Alpha one, the marines stood in shock at Conrad's final transmission. Bullseye turned to Sergeant Fowler and said, 'What the <em>HELL</em> have we gotten into this time Sarge?'

## 7. Get Ready

SURFACE OF ATLAS

0957 LOCAL TIME

UNSC ORBITAL GUN ONE

'What the \_HELL\_ have we gotten into this time Sarge?' George 'Bullseye' Gundar exclaimed.

Sergeant Fowler was unable to respond. What they had all heard on Conrad's radio transmission had rocked Fowler especially hard.

Sergeant Adam Lawson, recognising that something was up with Fowler, gave a few sharp commands, effectively clearing the barracks. Placing a hand on her shoulder, Lawson met her eyes with compassion. 'Everything alright, Alice?'

Fowler was tempted to lie. To merely shrug it off. Of course she was fine. She was a Marine wasn't she? And a rough-as-guts Sergeant to boot.

She raised her eyes to Lawson's, and he could see tears welling in her large hazel eyes.

'No! I'm not fine!' she finally sobbed. And for the first time in years, Alice Fowler cried.

\* \* \*

><p>Outside the barracks, Bullseye and the rest of Fowler's marines were getting worried. Their Sergeant had led them on countless missions against the Covenant, never once breaking under pressure. But now with this new threat, this new alien, she seemed to have lost her hardened demeanour. Finally, Bullseye decided to speak.<p>

'Alright boys, it looks like the Sergeant will be sitting this one out.'

The other marines turned to him. They knew that, as Fowler's second-in-command, Bullseye would be the one to lead them now. He continued.

'You all heard what happened to Conrad; it was one of those new Brute aliens. They are without a doubt the most evil bastards we have ever faced. But we need to stand firm. For the sake of the Sarge. For the sake of Atlas. For the sake of mankind in general. Each battle we win, we show the Covenant that the human race is not one to be trifled with. Now, you all heard Fowler's battle plans, so let's turn this place into the toughest nut the Covenant have ever had to crack. Move out!'

The marines all replied with a rousing 'Hoo-rah!', and went about setting up various defences. Bullseye threw one last look at the barracks door. 'It'll be ok Sarge. We'll get through this.'

\* \* \*

><p><em>This war has been hard on all of us.<em> Sergeant Lawson thought. \_Why can't it just end?\_

Lawson was standing at the foot of a bed, facing outwards. Lying on the bed was the now broken Sergeant Fowler. She had cried for nearly half an hour before stumbling towards a bed for a weary sleep. Lawson stood guard over her in a protective way. He also pondered the upcoming battle. What were the strategies the Brutes used? If they were replacing the Elites they must be devastating in battle. For that matter, what had happened to the Elites?

At that moment, Bullseye walked into the barracks, saluted, and said

'Defences are online sir.'

'Thankyou Corporal.' Lawson replied. 'I suggest you set yourself up on top with plenty of rifle ammo, I don't want our only sniper having to run down and reload halfway through the battle.'

'Will do sir.' Bullseye saluted, then strode towards the armoury. A few seconds later, the young red haired scout walked in.

'Sarge, Simmons just radioed in. He's made contact with Bravo team, and is going to stick with them for a while.'

Lawson nodded, then paused for a minute. 'Connor, when you joined us a few months ago, what did you say you specialised in?'

'Explosives. And I did alright in sharpshooting.'

'You mean you're a sniper as well?' Lawson asked with surprise.

'Not really,' Conner shrugged. 'But I was top in my squad.'

'That's excellent!' Lawson said happily. 'I want you up top with Corporal Gundar from the \_Testament\_. We need all the sniping ability we have.'

'Yes sir!' Connor saluted, and headed to the armoury to pick up a rifle.

\_With two snipers, we may have just increased our odds. \_Lawson thought.

## 8. Enter the Chopper

SURFACE OF ATLAS

1001 LOCAL TIME

ECHOLEON PASS

When the first wave of Grunts attacked his position, Sergeant Jonathan Walker of Charlie team knew his men were in deep trouble indeed. He knew that the Covenant army outnumbered him and his marines, but until he saw the magnitude of the opposing army with his own eyes, the reality hadn't set in.

There was one silver lining though. These Grunts were mostly a leaderless rabble, driven by the fear of the Brutes behind them. Their weaponry was basic also, just plasma pistols which were easy enough to avoid with the right amount of cover. Still, a hundred odd Grunts is not a sight any marine wants to see unless those Grunts are filled with lead.

Luck, it seemed, was on the Human side for this first battle. Without an Elite or Brute leader to stir them on in the midst of battle, the Grunts panicked as soon as one of their nearby comrades died. This resulted in wild shots that never hit any humans, or foolish plasma grenade throws that more often than not hit one of the Grunts in front of them. In a matter of minutes the first Covenant wave was a mere memory, the clearing silent save for the occasional burst as a Battle rifle took out a cowardly Grunt attempting to sneak back behind cover.

Once the field was clear, the marines took quick advantage of the lull. Medics rushed around fixing up the few marines who had taken hits, while the rest took the opportunity to replenish their dwindling supply of ammunition. Apart from a few burnt arms, none of the marines had any serious injuries; neither were any dead. But they

all knew the next battle would not be nearly this easy.

'Good work men.' Walker said over the radio. 'We showed those alien pricks who's boss. But be prepared for vehicles next round. Heavy ordinance team, I want you on field this time.'

A group of ten marines, all carrying rocket launchers and assault rifles, acknowledged his order and changed their position, spreading out along Charlie Teams position.

Suddenly a loud roar was heard from where the Covenant was based. All the marines snapped to attention and raised their guns to eye level, barrels trained on the forest edge. A full minute ticked by before movement was seen and a mix of Jackals and Grunts broke cover. Flanking this infantry were several Ghosts, raining hot plasma fire on the marines position. The marines responded in kind, rifles blaring and grenades exploding in the midst of the approaching infantry, while the keen eyed ordinance marines blasted the Ghosts to pieces. The destruction of the small vehicles boosted the marines confidence, although the sporadic loss of men made it less so.

When the mass of infantry had dwindled to half its original size, three huge masses of plasma shot high into the air. 'Wraith!' a marine yelled, causing most eyes to look up at the sky. It was at this moment that a line of the strange vehicles the scout Jackson had seen earlier broke the cover of the trees. The Jackals and Grunts made room for these grey monstrosities, and once the Wraith fire landed harmlessly before the marine line, the humans realised they had been duped; the real danger was from these new vehicles.

They could now be seen to be huge motorcycle-like things, each one driven by a snarling Brute. Worse, each machine was packing two grenade launchers, now being used with devastating effect on the Marines' position. After the barricade protecting them got destroyed, two marines began a hasty retreat from the vehicle opposing them. Suddenly another loud roar was heard and a burst of flame shot out from the exhausts of the Brute's vehicle, giving it an extra boost forward. It was now within a few metres of the marines, and it looked like there was no hope for them.

One of them looked over his shoulder and then tripped over a stone, falling onto his comrade and causing them both to fall. They both looked at the approaching machine, fear evident in their eyes. The Brute cheered with bloodlust and prepared to run them over.

And then his head exploded.

'I got your back boys.' Jackson called over the radio.

It was then that they noticed that several other Brutes and their vehicles lay motionless around the clearing, all killed in the same way. The rest of the Brute riders were milling around in confusion, and when another of their number collapsed into a heap, headless, they abruptly turned around and retreated, the surviving marines cheering and mocking the ape-like aliens.

'Thanks, Jackson.' The marine who had fallen over first called in. 'I owe you my life.'

'Or at least a beer.' Came Jackson's quick reply. Both men

laughed.

\* \* \*

><p>Sergeant Walker quickly assessed the battlefield. Hundreds of dead covenant lay strewn across the field; while a half dozen destroyed ghosts burned quietly in various locations. The Brute vehicles, now labelled 'Choppers' by the marines, sat calmly where their drivers had been killed. On the human side, at least a quarter of the marines lay dead or dying, and at least ten more had serious plasma burns. The medics where doing the best they could, but for some marines they were too late. Walker sighed. Only half of Charlie Team was fighting fit, and it weighed heavily on his shoulders. He knew that they wouldn't last much longer in battle, yet to retreat would increase the odds that they might reach the orbital guns.<p>

Sighing again, Walker turned his radio on to Charlie Teams frequency. 'Men, we gave those Covenant bastards a good strapping down today. Even the motorcycles from Hell couldn't destroy us. But I know you are all realist enough to realise that another attack like that would probably destroy us, especially if they start sending in those Hunters. Now I don't want to make you feel like cowards, but our only way to stay alive is to retreat. However, if you want to remain here and hold this position as long as possible, I will be happy to stand by your side.'

Walker paused for a moment. 'So does anyone here feel like retreating to fight another day?'

Determined silence greeted him. None of Charlie Team were backing down. Walker let out a smile. 'Alright then. Let's show these Covenant pansies what real men are made of!'

The remaining marines let out a deafening \_HOO-RAH! \_And quickly prepped their weapons. They were Charlie Team. UNSC Marines. And they were ready.

\* \* \*

><p>'Damn it Walker.' Captain Holwerda muttered angrily. 'Your pride will be your downfall.'<p>

Then he straightened up, smiled proudly and saluted. 'But by thunder I wish I was down there with you.'

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Authors Note: Right here is my first note. I'm hoping that the story is flowing nicely (and more reviews would be lovely, any suggestions will be appreciated). I'm planning to change the start of each chapter from here on, in other words getting rid of the timelocation section, and replacing it with a character section (which you will see why next chapter.)\*\*

\*\*Above all though, thankyou for everyone who reads this story, it is my first fan fiction, and as I have been writing various stories just for myself for several years, moving on to something like this is daunting. So I hope you enjoy this story as much as I enjoy writing it.\*\*

**\*\*Cheers, Nickos101\*\***

## 9. Charlie Shot Me!

**\_\*\*Jackson\*\*\_**

Sweat poured down Jackson's forehead as he reloaded his sniper rifle again. The last ten minutes had drained his energy as he mustered every ounce of his concentration to line up killing shots so his ammunition would last. Every hit caused a feeling of elation to wash over him; the satisfaction of seeing an alien fall over from a slug to the head before it could harm one of his squad mates was intense. Even so, the amount of Covenant breaking through the marines blockade was beginning to deplete their numbers at an alarming rate.

\_Boom!\_ Came the report of his rifle once more, followed a few milliseconds and several hundred yards later by the rough grunt of a Brute dying. He fired again and this time a Jackal and a Grunt standing next to it keeled over, the powerful bullet piercing through the heads of both aliens.

Suddenly a huge force struck him in the back and he catapulted across the ledge he was on, coming to rest only a few feet from the edge. He gasped with pain, and then realised he could no longer feel his legs. He heard a loud chuckle from behind him, and turned to see two Brutes, one with a large mace-like weapon and the other with its fists balled. The second had been the one to hit him.

\_Shit those brutes pack a punch!\_ He thought. \_But I'll be damned if that's gonna stop me!\_

The unarmed Brute roared a challenge, the other urging him on. Jackson responded with a frag grenade. 'Take this you ugly bastard!'

The grenade bounced once and then exploded in front of the Brutes, causing their armour to spark and several pieces to fall off. Jackson threw another, and the Brutes turned and fled.

'That's right! You got fricken' OWNED!'

Rolling over once more, he resumed firing on the Covenant forces below.

Then he felt the ground shudder and heard a Brute charging towards him, berserker rage evident in the way it roared. 'I will feast on your flesh, weakling!'

Grimacing with pain Jackson forced himself to turn over once more, only to find the Brute a few feet away

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>Walker<strong>\_

Sergeant Walker saw the explosion out of the corner of his eye. He turned towards the cliff face and yelled through his radio. 'Jackson! Respond!'

Only stony silence greeted him. 'Jackson!' He tried again.

But there was no response.

'Damn itâ€¦' he muttered, and then loosed off a few shots into a Grunt that had got a little too close for comfort. The short alien squealed as the bullets pierced it's body, and then fell over, still convulsing. He then turned on the open channel on his radio.

'Jackson isn't responding men. It looks like we're out of sniper cover.'

'Those bastards!' replied Hayden, one of the marines who had accompanied Jackson up to the ledge earlier. 'He was like a brother to me. These mofo's are gonna pay!'

Grabbing a spare Assault rifle from a recently killed marine, Hayden dual wielded the spare and his own Assault rifle, sending death throughout the Covenant ranks. Once they had both run dry, he tossed them both down and pulled out his SMG from the holster on his back. 'Die bitches!' He screamed as he peppered a Brute with bullets. When it too had run dry, he drew his knife and leapt towards another Brute that had just gotten over the barricades. Before the Brute could pull up its weapon, Hayden swiped down at its arm, causing the alien to release its gun. The Brute responded with a vicious uppercut, flinging Hayden several metres and stunning him. It then reached down and picked up its dropped weapon, which looked like a pistol with two bayonets attached, and leapt towards the stunned marine.

Sergeant Walker saw the whole thing in slow motion. Without any regard for his own safety, he began charging the Brute, firing his rifle at the same time. But he was never going to make it. He was too far away when the Brute reached Hayden and stabbed down with the gun at his unprotected neck.

In a daze Hayden saw the blades approaching him. \_So this is what it feels like to die.\_ He felt the blades reach his neck and thenâ€¦

Darkness.

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>Jackson<strong>\_

Jackson reacted without a thought, simply raising his rifle towards the threat, just as he had been instructed to do through countless drills. The Brute ran straight into it, its eyes full of surprise as the barrel of the sniper rifle entered its mouth.

'Feast on this, motherfucker.' Jackson said, pulling the trigger. From the front the only difference was that the Brutes eyes had now glazed over. The smoke trail now dissipating from behind the Brutes head told the story of another change. \_A second mouth to eat with\_. Jackson thought grimly. The body of the Brute then fell over backwards. The second Brute was nowhere to be seen.

It was at this moment that Jackson realised his radio had been



displaced. He adjusted it just in time to hear the end of Walkers open transmission. Snapping his last clip into the rifle, he prepared himself to turn over once more. But then he heard the \_smack\_ of the Brutes fist hitting Hayden's helmet, and once more relying on instinct, spun the rifle upwards and took the shot \_upside down\_ that saved Hayden's life milliseconds before the blades pierced his skin.

The darkness Hayden saw (or didn't see, in this case), was actually the Brute falling on top of him.

'Don't count me out too fast guys.' Jackson said with a smile on his face.

Due to his now broken helmet, Hayden could not reply, but he raised his hand in thanks, which he knew Jackson could see through the scope on the rifle.

Jackson smiled again. 'I do still want that beer after all.'

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>Walker<strong>\_

Sergeant Walker could not believe his eyes when he saw the Brute collapse, dead, on top of Private Hayden. Then he heard Jackson's transmission and let out a cheer. Reaching Hayden he dragged the heavy alien off him and pulled the marine to his feet. 'Looks like Lady Luck was on your side today, Private.'

Pulling off his busted helmet, Hayden replied. 'Can't quite say the same for my helmet though.'

Walker then handed him his Magnum pistol and, responding to some sixth sense, spun around and put several rounds through the head of a Jackal that was just about to take a shot at them. 'Woo-ha,' he laughed. 'Bam, headshot.'

Hayden just shook his head and went back to what he did best. Sharing ammunition with the aliens, Marine style.

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>Jackson<strong>\_

Jackson took a short breather after his upside down shot. His nerves were on edge, adrenalin was coursing through his veins, and his back hurt like hell where the Brute had punched him. But he was elated also. That shot would be the basis of some excellent bragging back on the \_Testament.\_ He doubted even George; the sniper from Alpha team, and regarded as one of the best in the UNSC; could have made that shot.

Propping himself up on his elbows he took a deep breath and thought \_Three shots left. Better make 'em count.\_ He closed his eyes for a moment. \_I could really do with that beer now.\_

When he opened his eyes again he swore, startled as the second Brute was now charging towards him, the huge mace raised above its head. Using all his strength, Jackson managed to roll out of the way just

before the huge weapon struck him.

But this weapon, later named a 'Gravity Hammer' by the UNSC, was more than a simple mace. When it struck the ground, it caused a shockwave to spread out, sending Jackson hurtling over the edge of the cliff.

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>Hayden<strong>\_

He was surrounded by Grunts. Unfazed, he twirled around, using the Magnum he received from Walker like it was an extension of his own body. Hayden was in the zone, and quickly killed the Grunts surrounding him, one bullet to each head. He blew on the smoking pistol, cowboy style, and then reached down and picked up several of the alien Plasma grenades, quickly lobbing them into the seemingly endless mass of Covenant still approaching the marines.

There was no way he was gonna survive this fight, he thought to himself. All around him, marines were running out of ammo, and while several managed to pick up enemy weapons and use them to some degree of effectiveness, they weren't Spartans, and as a result only had an inkling of how to fire the guns.

He did a quick head count. Including himself and the Sergeant, there were eight marines left. \_No wait, seven.\_ He corrected himself as another marine fell. Against several hundred Covenant.

So he did what most people would do in this situation. Laugh insanely and keep shooting.

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>Walker<strong>\_

With his Battle rifle now empty, and his Magnum in the hands of Private Hayden, Sergeant Walker deemed it a fitting time to retrieve his trusty shotgun and, like his old mentor Sergeant Avery Johnson used to, light a cigar. He threw his last grenade at the aliens, and in the confusion that followed, ducked behind a rock and pulled his shotgun out of the sack it was in. He also pulled out a satchel of shells, which he attached to his ammo belt. Finally, he pulled out a cigar from the now empty sack, and tried to light it with the Zippo from his pocket.

'Aww damn.' He said, disappointed when the flame didn't flare. 'She's all out of gas.'

Now quite unhappy, Walker strode out of cover, and then arched over backwards as a sizzling bolt of plasma came shooting towards his head. As it were, the bolt narrowly missed his head, but in passing managed to scrape the tip of his cigar, knocking it out of his mouth. With surprising reflexes he managed to catch it before it hit the ground. He then noticed that the cigar was now lit.

'Now that's something you don't see every day.' He chuckled taking a draw from the cigar.

Pulling it out of his mouth, he yelled, 'My thanks you ugly

bastards!' and fired his shotgun twice, sending several Grunts stumbling, soon picked off by a nearby marine.

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>Jackson<strong>\_

As Jackson fell, face towards the sky, time seemed to slow down for him. He saw the Brute lean out over the edge of the cliff, and fired two wild shots at it, both of which missed. He glanced over his shoulder and saw the ground rapidly approaching. He suddenly became calm, at ease with the fact he was about to die. He looked through the scope of his rifle one last time, and lined it up with the Brute's head. \_The bastard is celebrating. Well celebrate this!\_ Was his final thought, as he pulled the trigger mere milliseconds before he hit the ground.

Seconds earlier, the Brute peered over the edge to watch his enemy die. He laughed as the first two shots whizzed past him.

\_He was King!\_

Jackson lined up.

\_He was mighty!\_

Jackson pulled the trigger. The Brute saw Jackson hit the ground.

\_He was-!\_

Dead. With a bullet hole right between his eyes.

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>Hayden<strong>\_

Hayden watched as all the marines around him except for the Sergeant fell. His mind finally snapped and he was completely mad. Bullet after precision bullet pierced the skulls of both Grunt and Jackal, while Hayden laughed maniacally. His friends were dead. He had just seen Jackson fall to his death. But still he laughed, sending death in the form of a Magnum round to the oncoming aliens.

Finally a Brute faced him. He got three rounds off before \_click,\_ he ran dry. He felt his pockets. No ammo left. The Brute bellowed at him and swung its bladed grenade launcher at him. Hayden was hit in the chest. A fatal wound.

Still chuckling, Hayden noticed something on the ground near him. He forced his near-dead fingers to curl around it. He chuckled again as the Brute towered over him and prepared to finish him off. Hayden would have the last laugh. Oh yes.

The Brute plunged the blade down at the laughing marine, and chuckled a deep throaty chuckle. \_Now \_I \_have had the last laugh!\_ It thought to itself.

Then it was snapped out of its reverie by a high pitched whining sound. It looked down to see a plasma grenade stuck to its leg,

Hayden's dead hand nearby. The Brutes eyes grew wide with shock letting out a 'NOOOOO!' before it's leg exploded in a brilliant burst of concentrated plasma. Hayden had the last laugh indeed.

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>Walker<strong>\_

Walker was down to his last handful of shotgun shells. He turned on the open radio channel, fired off another shot, and spoke his last words.

'Charlie is down. Repeat, Charlie is down. I'm the only marine-' \_Boom!\_ '-Left alive. Covenant soon on route to-' \_Boom!\_ 'Bravo team. Don't let our-' \_Boom!\_ 'Deaths be in-' \_Boom!\_ 'Vain, Bravo team. Send these bastards to hell.' \_Boom-Click!\_ 'â€|Walker out.'

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Authors Note: This has probably been my favourite chapter to write so far. I hope it gave enough insight into the minds of some of the characters. Reviews always appreciated, and I hope people like the new labelling style. Also, I probably should have mentioned it from the start, but if anyone wants to be a Beta reader, I would appreciate it.<strong>

\*\*Cheers,\*\*

\*\*~Nickos101\*\*

End  
file.